



City of Seattle

Mike McGinn, Mayor

Seattle Human Rights Commission

Roslyn Solomon, Chair

January 10, 2011

Hon. Eric Holder, Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Pattern or Practice Investigation of Seattle Police Department

The Seattle Human Rights Commission requests that you assign a team from the Civil Rights Division to conduct a pattern or practice investigation (a "Section 14141 investigation") into the Seattle Police Department's use of force, its policies, procedures, training, and other matters that may be necessary.

We are deeply concerned about Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers' use of force in a number of recent interactions with Seattle residents, incidents that have involved persons of color. These interactions have been set forth in a December 3, 2010 letter from the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) to Assistant Attorney General Tom Perez and U.S. Attorney Jenny Durkan requesting a Section 14141 investigation. That letter was co-signed by thirty four Seattle community and civil rights organizations.

Both Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn and City Councilmember Tim Burgess, Chair of the Council's Public Safety Committee, have stated that they welcome such an investigation.

These incidents have had a profound and negative impact on Seattle's communities of color. As a Commission specifically charged with protecting the needs and concerns of vulnerable populations, we are troubled about the impact of these incidents on our City.

The Civil Rights Division has a demonstrated history of collaboratively working with police departments to improve their operations, policies, training, and community relations. We believe that the Division's involvement would strengthen public trust in our City's government and the Seattle Police Department. We believe that the Civil Rights Division can and should play an important role in evaluating the Seattle Police Department's oversight, training, and leadership and can be instrumental in bringing the City's leaders and communities together to agree on common sense solutions and best practices that will strengthen our community policing.

Sincerely,

Roslyn Solomon, Chair

Chris Stearns, Vice Chair

Cc: Assistant Attorney General Tom Perez, Civil Rights Division
U.S. Attorney Jenny Durkan